

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY ARA/USOAS:MDION
APPROVED BY ARA/USOAS:GMCCEE
USOAS - MR. TRAGEN
S/S-O:LRFLEISCHER

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TO AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OAS , SHUM

SUBJECT:URUGUAYAN AMBASSADOR ROCA OFFERS TO NEGOTIATE
CONCESSION TO IAHR

1. MCGEE/TRAGEN MET WITH OAS AMBASSADOR ROCA MORNING OF
JANUARY 4 TO CONTINUE INFORMAL DISCUSSION OF US POSITION ON
GOU OFFER TO HOST VIII OAS GA. IN SURPRISING TURNABOUT,
ROCA SUGGESTED THE GOU WOULD BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE ON HIGH
LEVEL OAS VISIT THAT WOULD LAY GROUNDWORK FOR NORMALIZING
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIS GOVERNMENT AND IAHR. PREVIOUSLY
HE HAD VIOLENTLY REJECTED ANY FURTHER DEALINGS WITH IAHR
AS PRICE OF US ACQUIESCENCE IN MONTEVIDEO GA. FOLLOWING
IS TEXT OF DRAFT ACTION MEMO USOAS/ARA ARE PREPARING FOR
THE DEPUTY SECRETARY.

2. BEGIN MEMO:
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ISSUE FOR DECISION

URUGUAY IS OFFERING TO NEGOTIATE A HIGH-LEVEL VISIT BY
AN OAS COMMISSION TO DISCUSS STEPS FOR REGULARIZING THE
GOU'S RELATIONS WITH THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMI-
SSION (IAHR) AS THE PRICE OF US ACQUIESCENCE FOR

HOLDING THE ANNUAL OASGA IN MONTEVIDEO.

ESSENTIAL FACTORS

THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE OAS WILL MEET ON JANUARY 11 TO DECIDE ON A SURPRISE OFFER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF URUGUAY TO HOLD THE VIII OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN MONTEVIDEO NEXT MAY. SETTING A NEW SITE REQUIRES A TWO-THIRDS VOTE. A LARGE MAJORITY OF LATIN AMERICAN DELEGATIONS APPEARS WILLING TO GO TO URUGUAY DESPITE ITS POOR HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD AND ITS ANGRY REJECTION OF THE YEAR-OLD REQUEST BY THE IAHRG TO CONDUCT ON-SITE INSPECTION. WE BELIEVE THAT TO HOLD THE OASGA IN MONTEVIDEO, AFTER SANTIAGO AND GRENADA, COULD BE INTERPRETED AS A MAJOR PUBLIC RELATIONS STEBACK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OAS ALTHOUGH MOST LATIN/CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES VIEW GA SITE SELECTION AS A PROCEDURAL, NON-SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION.

SOME STRONG SUPPORTERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS BELIEVE GOING TO MONTEVIDEO COULD FOCUS A POWERFUL SPOTLIGHT ON THE GOU AND CAUSE IT TO TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE ITS IMAGE AND RECORD. THEIR OVERRIDING CONCERN IS WITH HOW THE URUGUAYAN INVITATION CAN BE USED TO MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE BECAUSE THEY SEE THE TWO-THIRDS VOTE AS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. HAVING ANOTHER ONE-ISSUE GA FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW COULD

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DAMAGE THE FUTURE OF THE OAS BUT IT DOES SERVE TO ATTRACT WIDE ATTENTION TO ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS ISSUES IN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS.

IN ADDITION TO EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH DELEGATIONS OF THE MAIN HUMAN RIGHTS SUPPORTERS IN THE OAS, I HAVE MET THREE TIMES WITH THE URUGUAYAN AMBASSADOR TO THE OAS TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE STEPS TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE BETWEEN HIS COUNTRY AND THE IAHRG. IN OUR FIRST TWO DISCUSSIONS, HE WAS COMPLETELY INTRANSIGENT ABOUT URUGUAY EVER ACCEPTING A VISIT BY THE IAHRG ALTHOUGH HE WAS WILLING TO DISCUSS SOME FORM OF GESTURE TOWARD THE OAS.

SPEAKING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS, ROCA INITIALLY OFFERED TO EXPAND THE SIZE OF A GROUP OF US CITIZENS THAT THE GOU HAD ALREADY AGREED TO RECEIVE ON AN INVESTIGATIVE MISSION. WHEN WE LATER REJECTED ANY SUCH BILATERAL COMPROMISE AS NO FULFILLMENT OF URUGUAY'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM, ROCA COUNTERED WITH THE PROPOSAL THAT A HIGH-LEVEL GROUP OF OAS OFFICIALS COME TO MONTEVIDEO FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH THE GOU ON HUMAN RIGHTS. ASKED IF ONE OF THE OFFICIALS COULD BE A MEMBER OF THE IAHRG, ROCA SAID HE

COULD NOT COMMIT THE GOU BUT HE FELT ANYONE APPOINTED BY THE OAS SECRETARY GENERAL WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE THOUGH THE MISSION COULD NOT CARRY ON ANY INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITIES AND A VISIT BY THE IAHC ITSELF WOULD NOT BE TOLERATED. I EMPHASIZED THAT OUR PRIMARY CONCERN WAS GOU RESPECT FOR THE POSITION OF THE IAHC AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE OAS AND THAT WE WOULD FIND IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO SUPPORT AN OASGA IN A COUNTRY WHICH DID NOT FULLY ACCEPT ALL THE OBLIGATIONS OF OAS MEMBERSHIP, INCLUDING RECEIVING HE IAHC.

IN A THIRD CONVERSATION TODAY, ROCA REVERSED HIS STAND. HE INQUIRED WHAT OUR REACTIONS MIGHT BE TO A GOU INVITATION FOR A HIGH-LEVEL OAS GROUP TO COME TO MONTEVIDEO
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TO DISCUSS THE STEPS AND ACTIONS REQUIRED TO RE-ESTABLISH A CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIS GOVERNMENT AND THE IAHC. ROCA THEN ASKED ME MY VIEWS ON THE COMPOSITION OF SUCH A COMMISSION AND WHAT ITS PURPOSES WOULD BE. I SUGGESTED THAT APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS MAY BE THE SECRETARY GENERAL, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL AND EITHER THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OR THE CHAIRMAN OF THE IAHC AND THAT THEY SHOULD MEET WITH OFFICIALS OF EQUAL RANK OF THE GOU AND DEFINE THE STEPS REQUIRED TO RE-ESTABLISH CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE COMMISSION AND THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT.

AMBASSADOR ROCA INDICATED THIS WAS PRECISELY WHAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAS IN MIND. WHEN WE STATED SPECIFICALLY THAT NOTHING DONE BY THE OAS COMMISSION SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS WEAKENING THE AUTHORITY OF THE IAHC BUT RATHER BE A PART OF A POLITICAL PROCESS FOR FACILITATING AN OFFICIAL VISIT BY THE IAHC TO URUGUAY, ROCA WAS IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT. HE ASKED THAT I EXPLORE THIS POSITION WITHIN THE USG.

TYING URUGUAY TO SUCH A COMPROMISE OF ITS IMPLACABLE OPPOSITION TO ANY FURTHER DEALINGS WITH THE IAHC WOULD BE A REAL BREAKTHROUGH. IT WOULD GO FAR TOWARD REMOVING THE ONUS FROM AN INVITATION TO MEET IN MONTEVIDEO. IT IS PROBABLY STILL NECESSARY FOR THE US AND SEVERAL OTHER DELEGATIONS TO ABSTAIN IN THE JANUARY 11 VOTE. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE NOW TO BLOCK URUGUAY'S INVITATION BY LINING UP THE NEEDED NINE VOTES TO DENY A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOU IS EVIDENTLY WILLING TO OFFER A SIGNIFICANT CONCESSION TO THE IAHC AS THE PRICE OF US ACQUIESCENCE IN A MONTEVIDEO GA. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HAVE A SCENARIO THAT WOULD ENTAIL BOTH A HIGH-LEVEL OAS VISIT TO DISCUSS NEXT STEPS AND GOU AGREEMENT TO AN IAHC
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VISIT IN CALENDAR YEAR 1978.

WE WOULD LIKE AUTHORITY TO CONTINUE THESE DISCUSSIONS WITH URUGUAY--IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH VENEZUELA AND MEXICO--TO EXACT THE BEST COMPROMISE FOR AN OASGA IN MONTEVIDEO.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT YOU AUTHORIZE USOAS TO NEGOTIATE WITH AMBASSADOR ROCA TO ESTABLISH AN IRON-CLAD AGREEMENT TO RECEIVE AN OAS COMMISSION AND TO NEGOTIATE WITH IT THE CONDITIONS FOR AN IAHRG VISIT IN 1978 AS THE PRICE OF ACQUIESCENCE IN URUGUAY'S OASGA INVITATION. END MEMO

3. REQUEST YOUR VIEWS. CHRISTOPHER

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